a177

R 166873Z OCT 79 FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

PM-COUP-BACKO / BANGUI

WITHIN HOURS OF THE COUP, THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE TOOK TO THE STREETS AND STARTED SMASHING AND LOOTING SHOPS, INCLUDING SOME BELONGING TO THE BOKASSA FAMILY. THE DEPOSED LEADER WAS OUT OF THE COUNTRY WHEN THE COUP OCCURRED.

TODAY HE WAS ON A PLANE AT A MILITARY AIRBASE NORTH OF PARIS WHILE THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT DECIDED WHETHER HE COULD BE GIVEN SANCTUARY IN FRANCE.

THIS MORNING IN BANGUI, THE STREETS WERE LITTERED WITH BROKEN GLASS, RIPPED-UP BOXES AND OTHER REMAINS OF THE MASS LOOTING. ONE FRENCH RESIDENT SAID FACTORIES AS WELL AS SHOPS WERE RANSACKED IN THE RAMPAGE.

SOME 800 FRENCH COMMANDO TROOPS WERE FLOWN IN FROM NEIGHBORING GABON AND CHAD, WHICH LIKE THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC ARE FORMER COLONIES OF FRANCE.

LIGHT ARMORED CARS CRISS-CROSSED THE CITY IN A SHOW OF FORCE APPARENTLY AIMED AT PREVENTING MORE LOOTING.

THE NEW PRESIDENT CALLED ON FRANCE TO SEND IN THE TROOPS, SAYING THEY WERE NEEDED TO PREVENT ANY RETALIATION BY THE OUSTED EMPEROR. FRANCE SAID THEIR PRESENCE WAS INDISPENSIBLE TO THE SAFETY OF THE FRENCH COMMUNITY IN BANGUI.

"HAD HE ARRIVED TWO HOURS EARLIER, HE WOULD HAVE PREVENTED THE LOOTING," ONE FRENCH COMMANDO SAID OUTSIDE A SMASHED SHOP.

MORE 0943

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY RLCS DATE 10/25/92
RDS☐ or XDS☐ EXT. DATE
TS AUTH.) A ON (S)
ENDORSE EXISTING ING. ☐
DECLASSIFIED☐ SIFIABLE☑
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

a178

R 166893Z OCT 79 FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

PM-COUP-BACKO / BANGUI

THE FRENCH TROOPS, IN COMBAT GEAR AND BRANDISHING SUB-MACHINEGUNS, GUARDED THE MAIN GATE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE IN BANGUI AND THE OFFICE NOW USED BY MR BACKO.

THE NEW GOVERNMENT DID NOT HAVE TIME TO REMOVE THE MANY SIGNS OF THE EMPIRE, INCLUDING THE EAGLES THAT DECORATE THE OUTER WALL OF THE PALACE.

BOKASSA'S RED-AND-GOLD THRONE, STUDDED WITH DIAMONDS AND BEARING THE LETTER "B" IN GOLD, WAS STILL IN THE MAIN HALL OF THE PALACE WHERE THE PRESIDENT WELCOMED REPORTERS TODAY.

BOKASSA'S STATUE STILL STOOD IN ONE OF THE MAIN AVENUES OF BANGUI, ALONG WITH SIGNS DECLARING, "LONG LIVE BOKASSA THE FIRST."

REUTER 0943